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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001702

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, EUR/RPM, SCA/A

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/25/2019

TAGS: NATO PREL MOPS MARR AF TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY/AFGHANISTAN: MORE TRAINING POSSIBLE,
ADDITIONAL TROOPS UNLIKELY

REF: SECSTATE 120807

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador briefed Turkish General Staff Deputy Chief Aslan Guner November 24 on the President's plan to announce a significant increase in U.S. civilian and military contributions to Afghanistan (reftel) and pressed Turkey to strongly support this announcement and provide significant additional contributions. Guner said Turkey was unlikely to commit additional troops or lift existing caveats on its forces. He said Turkey is looking to boost its training activities in support of ISAF. We also demarched the MFA, including Deputy U/S Engin Soysal, and received a very similar response. The MFA underscored Turkey's intensive efforts on the diplomatic and reconstruction track and said it was developing options to support NATO's training efforts in Afghanistan. End Summary.

¶2. (C) GEN Guner understood that CJCS ADM Mullen was scheduled to phone TGS Chief of Staff GEN Basbug and acknowledged that Afghanistan was the likely subject of the call. Ambassador stressed that Afghanistan is a top priority for the USG, that this is a critical juncture in the eight-year long international effort, and that it is crucial for all Allies to redouble our efforts now to ensure that NATO's signal operation succeeds. Guner highlighted the substantial additional contributions Turkey announced in April: doubling of forces to about 1800 troops in Kabul, taking command of RC-Capital, sending three additional Operational Mentoring Liaison Teams (for a total of four Turkish OMLTs), agreeing to field a second PRT in Jawzjan that will also cover Sari Pul Province, providing significant police and military training, sending numerous teams to RC-North as part of the Election Support Force, sending helicopters to meet a critical ISAF shortfall, and pledging a total of 200 million USD for Afghanistan's economic development. Noting that Turkey is still in the final stages of fulfilling these commitments, Guner assessed that it would be extremely unlikely for Turkey to send additional troops.

¶3. (C) On lifting caveats, he noted that Turkey's "soft power" in Afghanistan -- from which all Allies derive some benefit -- relies in large part on the trust of the population. Lifting Turkey's two remaining caveats could be seen by the population as a shift which could erode confidence in Turkey as a friendly power.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador pushed back, underscoring that the new NATO approach was to use forces to protect the population; limits on actions troops could take in exigent circumstances would reduce their effectiveness in protecting the Afghan people, and consequently the Afghan people's support. Guner said that Turkey may be able to take additional steps to boost NATO's training efforts, noting that standing up a capable Afghanistan security force is critical to the Alliance's "exit strategy."

¶5. (C) We also delivered the demarche to MFA Deputy DG for South Asia Burak Akcapar on November 24 and DCM met with MFA Deputy U/S Soysal on November 25. Akcapar recapitulated Turkey's contributions since April 2009 and said he hoped these contributions would not be "counted against Turkey." He said that Turkey's approach on Afghanistan has always been to emphasize civilian engagement, and that beyond its military contributions, Turkey is offering vital contributions in diplomacy and reconstruction that are also essential in Afghanistan.

¶6. (C) Highlighting Turkey's trilateral mechanism with Afghanistan and Pakistan aimed at building trust between Kabul and Islamabad, Akcapar said that Turkey is planning five key meetings over the next several months, to include meetings among the heads of state, foreign ministers, education ministers, chiefs of defense and intelligence chiefs. The MFA is also aiming to encourage greater regional ownership and dialogue regarding the challenges in Afghanistan and Pakistan and is planning a "Neighbors Summit" and a "Regional Brain Trust Summit" involving, respectively,

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the political and intellectual leaders of Afghanistan and its immediate neighbors.

¶7. (C) Reviewing Turkey's approach on Afghanistan and Pakistan, Akcapar said it is crucial that the civilian dimension must be seen as leading the effort and that a surge in civilian capabilities to win hearts and minds is essential. The reintegration process will also be key, Akcapar noted, and Turkey will do its part in support of this effort.

¶8. (C) Akcapar noted that the MFA is currently in the process of examining options for expanding Turkey's military training efforts and that this may be an area where Turkey can offer additional meaningful contributions. Citing General McCrystal's 60-day assessment, Akcapar said that the current plan calls for an additional 5000 Afghan conscripts each month. He stressed that the only way to successfully integrate such massive numbers is to ensure that there is an effective officer corps and that Turkey is considering how it can contribute to the development of Afghanistan's officer corps. Akcapar concluded by echoing Guner's assessment: He does not believe Turkey will be able to provide additional troops or lift caveats.

¶9. (C) Comment: It is notable we received virtually the identical message from the military and the MFA. It appears that there has already been high-level GoT coordination on the issue, likely as part of Turkey's preparations for PM Erdogan's December 7 meeting with POTUS. End Comment.

JEFFREY

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